

## Narrative Exposure Therapy: Trauma Treatment for survivors of war and torture

On November 10, as part of the International Mass Trauma program of research in the department of Family Social Science, Dr. Liz Wieling co-sponsored with the Center for Victims of Torture a half-day seminar on Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET). The seminar was presented by its originators: Drs. Claudia Catani and Frank Neuner from the department of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, University of Bielefeld, Germany and the vivo Foundation ([www.vivofoundation.net](http://www.vivofoundation.net)).

NET is an evidence based intervention developed for the treatment of PTSD implemented worldwide to those affected by traumatic events resulting from war, organized violence, and natural disasters. It incorporates cognitive-behavioral exposure therapy and testimony therapy, explicitly addressing the socio-political aspects of healing. "Unaware of the consequences of psychotrauma on their mental health, survivors generally avoid to seek psychotherapeutic treatment, they are caught in an inability to express what happened. They suffer so-called 'speechless terror', frightening thoughts and memories of their ordeal and feel emotionally numb, especially towards people they were once close to. NET proves extremely culturally sensitive, since survivors tell their own stories, in their own fashion and ways of cultural expression, related to their own traditional and personal background and setting."

The seminar addressed the cognitive and neuroscientific background of NET, the procedure and the current state of evaluation research with asylum seekers, refugees, and war survivors in conflict regions.

The seminar brought in about 90 participants including students and faculty from the University, and professionals representing different mental health disciplines located at a variety of community agencies. Part of the seminar included a live demonstration where Drs. Jennifer Fallon, a Postdoctoral Fellow at CVT and Claudia Catani role played the lifeline approach used in the NET intervention.



l to r: Drs. Liz Wieling, Claudia Catani, and Frank Neuner



Drs. Jennifer Fallon, a Postdoctoral Fellow at CVT and Claudia Catani role played at NET seminar



Lifeline approach used in the NET intervention

### *About the NET originators:*

**Frank Neuner's** expertise includes: Psychotherapy of torture victims and clinical and neuroscientific research. He is a member of vivo Germany, Italy, and Uganda.

**Claudia Catani's** expertise includes: Neurophysiology of stress reactions; epidemiology and treatment of trauma related disorders of organized and family violence. She is a Board member of vivo Germany and Italy.